

**Testimony of Brenda Anderson, Director of Development  
Community Development Corporation Bentonville/Bella Vista, Inc.  
Given at the White House Conference on Aging  
Schmieding/ILC Solutions Forum on Elder Caregiving  
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Chair Person and Members of the White House Conference on Aging Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony to your committee regarding elder homecare, and more specifically, the solutions that we have found for providing services in association with housing.

My name is Brenda Anderson, and I am the Director of Development for the Community Development Corporation of Bentonville/Bella Vista, Inc. For the past thirteen years our local non-profit corporation has developed and managed affordable housing in the community. We currently own and/or manage 213 units of senior housing.

It has been our goal to provide a variety of housing options that reflect the varied social, economic, and physical needs of seniors in our community. We have used the following strategies to achieve that goal:

- **Apartments for independent elders located in close proximity to existing social and community services.** These projects were developed as in “in-fill” in the downtown area, located within walking distance of business, shopping, and cultural venues. Each project includes an on-site community center designed to encourage social interaction, and units feature accessible design to allow for aging in place. The projects are affordable, serving seniors whose incomes do not exceed sixty percent of the area median income.
- **Affordable senior campus.** Through a partnership with the Area Agency on Aging, we were able site independent senior housing next door to a new senior activity center. The Center provides daily meal service, as well as social, physical fitness, and educational opportunities. AAA caseworkers also provide case management for many residents, facilitating access to in-home services. Again, the project features on-site common areas and accessible design throughout.
- **Affordable assisted living.** With assistance from National Cooperative Bank Development Corporation who administered the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s Coming Home Program, we developed Arkansas’ first affordable assisted living project. The Medicaid waiver for assisted living provides elders with an opportunity to receive assistance with activities of daily living in an apartment setting. Without the waiver, these same elders would be required to live in a traditional nursing facility in order to receive services. The waiver delivers

those same services with a savings of approximately thirty percent, and provides elders with a housing choice.

- **Mixed-use development.** With the gift of a commercial building located in Bella Vista Village and through the generosity of local foundations, we were able to develop a mixed-use project that emphasizes four key needs for elders: housing, healthcare, lifelong learning, and service to others. The physical needs of the residents are addressed through on-site apartments, a medical clinic, physical rehab facility, and a café. Lifelong learning opportunities are provided by a satellite campus of Northwest Arkansas Community College offering classes of interest to elders, a local computer club's lab, a community access cable television station, and the Schmieding Center. Area residents are able to receive and provide services to others through a variety of non-profit organizations in the building such as Volunteers in Action, the Area Agency on Aging, Courtesy Van, and United Way of Benton County. Commercial entities located in the building also include a home health agency and a beauty salon. Cross-subsidy from commercial leases allow us to provide a low lease rate for non-profit entities.
- **Cooperative housing.** Cooperatives have been available as a housing alternative for elders in the upper Midwest for many years. We have just completed and occupied the first senior housing cooperative in Arkansas and have plans for construction of another in the near future. We have chosen to develop cooperatives for elders in our community because of the positive environment for seniors created by the cooperative concept. Gerontologist Gerald Glaser described that environment and its benefits in his 1981 testimony to the President's Housing Commission as follows: "the essential benefit of the cooperative is that it provides an economic structure and social framework that fosters self-reliance, self control and determination, interdependence and cooperation among the resident members . . . factors that contribute directly to continued independent living, successful aging and the enhancement of longer life." Within a cooperative, residents can determine their service needs and act together to develop the most effective means of addressing those needs.

We have been able to develop a variety of affordable housing and market-rate housing products through the use of many different, and often combined, funding sources. Without the continued availability of these sources, the development of affordable and innovative senior housing will not be possible in our community. Public sources we have used include: HUD's HOME Program and the IRS Section 42 Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program administered by Arkansas Development Finance Authority, and HUD's Section 202 Program. Private sources have included the Federal Home Loan Bank of Dallas' Affordable Housing Program, local foundations and local banks. It should be noted that private sources typically will not provide loans or grants to projects that do not have the stability provided by a public funding source. Hence, the continuation of public funding for affordable senior housing is vital.

Furthermore, I would like to suggest that funding for these programs be increased at a rate that reflects the growing number of seniors in our community and across the nation. Each of our affordable housing developments has a long waiting list, and we are unable to meet the current demand for affordable senior housing. Continuing to fund these programs at their current levels will only lead to an increasing gap between supply and demand in the senior housing market.

From a programmatic standpoint we have found that while most public funding sources allow for development of units that accommodate service delivery; however, there are regulatory and process-oriented barriers to innovative elder housing development. For example, the HUD loan guarantee program for cooperatives includes antiquated mortgage caps and is not a part of the MAPS program that allows for an abbreviated processing period. The HUD Section 202 program makes it difficult for a developer to include fully accessible features in all units, a design choice that would enhance the residents' ability to age in place. These and other program features negatively impact the supply and design quality of a senior housing in our nation.

In summary, we have learned that through public and private partnerships it is possible to provide seniors with access to a variety of housing choices that allow for and facilitate the delivery services. We believe that when housing and services are offered in tandem to seniors, efficiency and cost effectiveness increases for all parties. We ask the Committee to include in its recommendations to the White House the continuance and expansion of programs that support the development of affordable and innovative senior housing, as well as a recommendation for the review of such programs relative to the barriers that exist within those programs to said housing development.

Thank you again for your time and attention. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.